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United States Department of Agriculture

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# FERAL SWINE:

## An Overview of a Growing Problem

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service



# What Are Feral Swine?

Feral swine (also called wild pigs, Eurasian boar, or feral hogs) are a harmful and destructive invasive species. They are not native to North America. Early explorers and settlers first brought feral swine into the United States in the 1500s as a source of food. The number of feral swine grew further after that; they were introduced repeatedly in different areas of the country and also started crossbreeding with escaped domestic pigs. Today, their geographic range is quickly expanding as their populations continue increasing nationwide. Over 6 million feral swine can now be found across more than 35 States.

# What Do They Look Like?



Feral swine come in many different sizes and colors because of their extensive crossbreeding. Some look like pure Russian or Eurasian wild boars, while others look more like domestic pigs. Adults weigh from 75 to 250 pounds on average, but can get twice as large as that. They generally have a thick coat of coarse, bristly hair.

# Signs of Feral Swine



Property damage and destroyed vegetation from rooting or digging; can be extensive and cover several acres



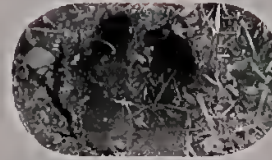
Wallows (wide, shallow holes) in moist areas in warmer months



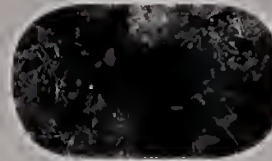
Rubbing marks on trees and fence or power line posts (often occur after wallowing, leaving behind mud, hair, and scent)



Tunnels and trails through thick vegetation



Tracks in the mud near springs, ponds, and streams



Feral swine "scat" (resembles dog feces and may contain acorns, grains, and animal hair, scales, or feathers)



# Why Are They a Problem?

Feral swine cause major damage to property, agriculture (crops and livestock), native species and ecosystems, and cultural and historic resources. In fact, this invasive species costs the United States an estimated \$1.5 billion each year in damages and control costs. Feral swine also threaten the health of people, wildlife, pets, and other domestic animals. As feral swine populations continue to expand across the country, these damages, costs, and risks will only keep rising.

## AGRICULTURE

Feral swine damage crops and destroy land with their feeding, rooting, trampling, and wallowing behaviors. They can spread diseases to livestock and even attack and kill them, mainly calves and lambs. Feral swine also degrade pasture grasses; eat, contaminate, and destroy livestock feed; and damage farm property, such as fences, water systems, irrigation ditches, troughs, and levees.

## NATURAL RESOURCES

Feral swine behaviors, such as eating, rooting, compacting soil, and wallowing, all damage native plants. Feral swine also compete with native wildlife for food, eat invertebrates and other small animals, and destroy nests and consume eggs of reptiles and ground-nesting birds. Because feral swine prefer wet environments, they can also compete with native wildlife for water during dry seasons.

## HEALTH AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Feral swine can carry at least 30 diseases and nearly 40 types of parasites that may affect people, pets, livestock, and wildlife. They can also transmit foodborne illnesses, such as *E. coli*, toxoplasmosis, and trichinosis. Feral swine have been aggressive in some encounters with people and may also threaten pets. And, when in roadways or at airports, feral swine can cause car accidents and aircraft collisions, posing direct risks for public safety.

## PROPERTY

Feral swine destroy landscaping, damage fences and other structures, and otherwise reduce the aesthetic value of private properties, public parks, and recreational areas. Because of their large size, collisions with vehicles and aircraft can result in costly property damage.

## CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

Other resources affected by feral swine include national historic sites, tribal sacred sites and burial grounds, cemeteries, and archaeological sites and digs. Feral swine damage structures, destroy vegetation, and disturb soil and land. This can seriously degrade the significance and historic integrity of these sites.



# How You Can Help

Wherever feral swine are, they become a problem, threatening livestock, agriculture, property, forests and other natural areas, native wildlife, and public health and safety.

- ▶ **Report any feral swine** sightings, signs, or damage to wildlife and agriculture officials in your State. This is especially important if you live in an area with very few or no feral swine.
- ▶ **Don't relocate feral swine** to new areas or transport them to other States.
- ▶ **Spread the word** to discourage others from transporting and spreading feral swine to new areas.





## ROOTING DAMAGE



## INTERACTING WITH LIVESTOCK



# About Our Work

Wildlife Services, part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), is on the front lines in the battle with this invasive animal. Through a coordinated national effort, we are working closely with partners at the State and local levels to address the extensive damage caused by expanding feral swine populations.

APHIS is a multifaceted Federal agency with a broad mission area that includes protecting and promoting U.S. agricultural health, regulating genetically engineered organisms, administering the Animal Welfare Act, and carrying out wildlife-damage management activities. These efforts support the overall mission of USDA to protect and promote food, agriculture, natural resources, and related issues.



# Want To Learn More?

Call Wildlife Services at **1-866-4USDA-WS** or go to **[www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife-damage/stopferalswine](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife-damage/stopferalswine)**. Our staff can give advice and direct help in dealing with feral swine. We also have a wealth of information on our Web site.



**Manage the Damage  
Stop Feral Swine**

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